

## APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

### 2014 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Minneapolis Public Schools  
Program Name: City of Lakes AmeriCorps

Application ID: 14AC156659

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

#### Reviewers' Summary Comments:

##### Strengths:

The applicant provides clear and compelling data on the severity of the problems existing in the district's high poverty, low-performing schools based on high academic need levels of Long-Term English Learners requiring academic assistance.

There are nine schools in crisis seeking academic assistance. Five are Title I priority or in-focus need schools which are in desperate need of support. The sixth is a Continuous Improvement school. Of the remaining schools involved in the proposed program, only one school is not in jeopardy. The remaining two are waiting for data to determine placement.

The applicant demonstrated the preponderance of the problem in the context of (1) state assessments, (2) status of students, (3) teacher's caseloads, (4) achievement gaps, and (5) poverty level. In addition, the applicant showed the need for the program to address or alleviate the problem.

The applicant used the literature review to establish the need of the program to improve students' deficiency reading skills.

The applicant provides clear and compelling data to substantiate the need for continuing to work with English Learners (ELs), deepening the focus on Long-Term English Learners (LTELs).

The applicant presented current research that indicates the achievement gap between white non-ELs and ELs in Math, Reading and Science.

The applicant provides clear data that supports the high need in the nine Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) schools chosen for this project.

Based on the literature review presented, it seems that the model produces the desired outcomes.

In a well-designed program, the applicant does an effective job in utilizing the talents of Members serving in-school and after-school components which interventions benefit the schools' LTELs.

The applicant provides sufficient data to support AmeriCorps Members as appropriate for the role of change agent in this program. AmeriCorps members have the time, training and support to provide the necessary daily 1:1 and small group interventions. AmeriCorps Members will also be available to ensure that parents are engaged in this program.

The applicant, a current grantee, presents solid evidence that several of its pre-determined program goals, with one exception, have been achieved, demonstrating success at overcoming identified needs.

Milestones include, for example, the larger numbers of ELs enrolling, completing tutoring, and finishing the AmeriCorps program. In each of these instances numerical outcome goals were surpassed.

Data has been already collected from teachers and it is pointing toward positive results regarding improvement of speaking skills, listening, reading, and homework completion.

The applicant clearly demonstrated the success of the first year of the current grant with regards to the number of students AmeriCorps Members worked with and the number of students completing the program. The performance measure targets on both of these were exceeded.

Weaknesses:

Lacking in the description of problems of LTELs and their schools in crisis is comparison and descriptive data highlighting the academic and subject deficiencies of at-risk students in need.

Absent in the discussion is how partner schools compare in testing in the core subjects of reading and writing which is a focus of the application.

Although the applicant links the lack of learning English to low graduation rates, there is no comparison data provided. For example, the applicant provides statistics for the four year graduation rate of ELs as being 38.3%, but does not provide the four year graduation rate for non-English Learners.

Insufficient attention is focused on precise expectations and specified outcomes of the after-school programs which AmeriCorps Members will put in place to harness the support from parents and outside enrichment agencies to benefit students.

The applicant does not explain the methodology, sample size, effect size, and data analyses of the different studies.

The applicant did not explain how validity and reliability measures would be ensured concerning the "Stakeholder evaluations."

There is incomplete information on testing scores reported by the applicant since the results from two different test

programs utilized over a two-year period are not presented side-by-side, analyzed, or compared.

Although supplemented by findings in teacher surveys, the results are more qualitative in nature and less outcome-oriented.

Academic progress data is not available yet.

The applicant cannot demonstrate past performance effectiveness of the intervention due to the lack of academic progress data.